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NSC BRIEFING

29 April 1954

INDOCHINA MILITARY PICTURE

I. Dien Bien Phu garrison barely hanging on.

A. "Asphyxiation" tactics of
whittling it down.

1. This involves isolation
of individual subpositions;
garrisons then succumb or
withdraw.

B. French abandoned Huguette 6 on
17 April. Lost Huguette 1 on
23 April.

C. Airstrip drop zone thus con-
stricted. But drops been
sufficient maintain garrison.
From 11-26 April tonnage roughly
equaled estimated consumption.

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D. French regrouped most of positions east of river into two major strongpoints, Eliane Haut and Eliane Bas.

E. Enemy been most active in north-west

trenches approaching Eliane 1 and Eliane 2. possible pincer movement against these two high ground positions.

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- C. Daily losses exceed replacements;
French on 25 April list 900 litter
cases, 1,000 walking wounded.
- D. Total men estimated 9-12,000,
including wounded.

III. Relief column from north Laos appears
impractical.

- A. Four battalions (mostly Laotians)
now 35 miles southwest garrison.
Have mission divert enemy
reinforcements.
- B. This force must be reinforced
to several times its size to
relieve Dien Bien Phu.

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- 1.  lacks air
strength support such
larger group.

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IV. Viet Minh in poor shape too.


C. Estimated enemy strength about
36,000. Believed casualties
about 13,000.

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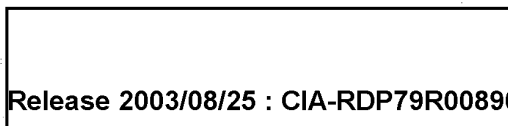
VII. Enemy saturation Tonkin delta makes precarious situation there.

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A.  battle for delta might be lost at Dien Bien Phu. (Released Viet Minh regulars there can be concentrated delta start of fall dry season. Probably can't hit hard in the near future.)

B. Viet Minh already begun hitting hard at Hanoi-Haiphong communications, isolated guard posts. (69,500 enemy troops inside delta, including regulars, regionals and militia.)

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- C. Fall Dien Bien Phu might be
signal even greater effort
against airfields and towns,
as well as road and rail networks.
- D. French reserves may be unable
counter such action.

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